

### Veronique Taylor's Own Statement:

What a time to be alive. How have I been working as a black nurse during a pandemic and on the brink of what seems to be a modern day civil war? It's been mentally draining and exhausting to say the least. I am tired. Hour by hour things change, there are meetings to be had and even fear as a nurse that I may be furloughed until the curve has flattened.

Since the pandemic, I volunteered to be 'deployed' (this is how the hospital refers to it) indefinitely on an all COVID unit. Many nurses were terrified of the idea of being on an all COVID floor. I was not, I was concerned about job security. Not only my job, but I knew the families the other nurses had to go home to. It was just me and my puppy so I did not mind volunteering myself for deployment. The purpose of the deployment was to protect our jobs as there was talk of my department going on diversion. They were already furloughing nurses more often than normal.

On this COVID unit, I was placed in roles where I was either over or under qualified. Aside from wearing PPE 12-14hrs a shift, I also had to deal with rising conflicts amongst staff about specific roles. It was a huge adjustment for everyone. Although being on that unit had its challenges, seeing the things I saw just made me appreciate what I do even more. I would leave work with a headache or just be physically exhausted but I loved to come back and see those patients improve or even better, be discharged. After being up there for awhile, you develop a rapport with the patient. To see them decline or even die hurt the most.

I always found it interesting to be called a hero since the pandemic. I never viewed myself as a hero. The word 'hero' to me carries a lot of expectation and pressure. I am not a hero. I am a normal human being who chose nursing because I love to advocate and help those who are most vulnerable.

I am back on my home unit of mother-baby. Speaking honestly, I am still exhausted even when I am off. Self-Care has really saved me so I'm sure to give myself the attention I need when I feel off balance. My Self-care routine is a bit modified because I realized that setting boundaries and saying 'no' is my form of self-care on top of journaling, meditating and reading.